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Release 2006/12/27 : CIA-RDP79-00927A004200010003-4

6 September 1963

OCI No. 0296/63B

Copy No.

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SPECIAL REPORT

SHAH'S REFORMS TO BE GIVEN ELECTION TEST IN IRAN

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SHAH'S REFORMS TO BE GIVEN ELECTION TEST IN IRAN

The "White Revolution" in Iran, with land reform as its leading element, is about to be given a popular test in parliamentary elections. Support for the Shah's program is expected from peasants, urban workers, and the newly enfranchised women voters--those elements which have benefited most so far. Opposition is centered in those groups--the landlords and the clerics--whose power is being undermined by the reform, and they are backed up by the vocal, nationalistic intelligentsia which distrusts the Shah's authoritarianism and by the economically dissatisfied merchants and underemployed city workers. The security forces have been able to control the dissident elements up to this time. While the electoral process may be less blatantly rigged than in the past, the government-approved candidates will probably meet little active opposition. The major opposition groups may even decide to boycott the election, although they probably could not keep large numbers of voters from the polls.

Election Mechanics

In July, the government published new regulations concerning election procedures and announced that national elections would be held on 17 September. The new regulation introduced a system of voter identity cards intended to prevent multiple voting, one of the major abuses of past elections.

The constitution requires a national parliamentary election every four years. However, Iran has had no Majlis (parliament) since 1961, when the Shah prorogued it following charges of rigged elections. In the interim he has ruled by decree, submitting his reform program to a referendum. In the coming elections for the 21st Majlis, all 200 seats of the lower house and 15 of the 60 Senate seats are being contested.

The Shah has appointed a number of task forces to aid in screening candidates and to guide the rank-and-file voters. These task forces include groups representing the farmers and agricultural cooperatives, led by Undersecretary Salur and Agricultural Bank Manager Zahedi; organized labor, led by Minister of Labor Khosrovani; the intellectuals, led by Progressive Center leader Hasan Ali Mansur; women's groups and metropolitan Tehran, led by Major Nafisi; the military, under the guidance of General Kamal, J-2 of the Iranian general staff; and a group charged with mobilizing the support of the school faculties. Other task forces are charged with publicity and electoral procedures. General Fardust, deputy chief of SAVAK, the internal security organization, is charged with checking the personal histories of possible candidates.

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There has been no attempt to establish a two-party system with a loyal opposition, such as that attempted by the Shah in the 1961 elections.

The government instead has organized a broad movement of national union, variously called the "Union of National Forces" and the "National United Front," to supersede previous progovernment political parties and groupings. The new organization was formally launched at a rally in Tehran in late August. A nominating convention then "selected" the proreform candidates from the lists screened by SAVAK. The 193 candidates thus chosen received the Shah's blessing. The remaining seven seats of the Majlis are reserved for nominees of the religious minorities and Bahrein (which Iran still claims).

Throughout the country, SAVAK, with the help of local police, gendarmeries, governors general, and other public officials, is keeping close watch on all election activity and is urging widespread participation in the elections by peasants, workers, and women. Election rallies have been held in all parts of Iran for this purpose.

Voter registration, which began on 1 August, has been light and marked by apathy and dissatisfaction apparently due to the widespread belief that the elections will be controlled as they were in the past. The government's campaign to "get out the vote" now is moving in-

to high gear, and the deadline for registration has been extended.

Campaign Issues

The Shah's six-point reform program is the only campaign issue. The popular referendum in January gave this program overwhelming support. Through it the Shah has in effect sought to replace the traditional elite and the nationalistic middle class with the peasantry as the political base for his regime.

The six points of the program are: (1) land reform; (2) compensation of dispossessed landlords with shares of government-owned corporations; (3) profit sharing between management and labor in industrial enterprises; (4) formation of a literacy corps; (5) nationalization of forests; and (6) revision of the electoral laws. The most significant of these, and the key to the future course of events in Iran, is land reform. The Shah is in effect gambling the future of his throne on its success and on the chance that it will foster a favorable attitude toward the regime among the peasant mass which makes up about 70 percent of Iran's 21 million people.

Land Reform

Land reform is a basic element of the Shah's "revolution." In 1951 he declared that he would turn over 2,100 villages and surrounding cultivated area, owned by the crown, to the local peasants. The Shah's example,

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however, was not followed by other Iranian landlords, and even his own program fell far short of its goal. Only about 500 royal villages had been distributed by the spring of 1962, when the present land reform program got into full swing.

The program aims at converting about one third of Iran's villages into peasant cooperatives. Those villages affected are former fiefs of individual landlords who must sell their holdings to the government. They receive notes which are to be paid off over 15 years in annual installments. The land thus acquired is organized into viable units and turned over to the newly formed cooperatives as soon as they are ready to begin operations. Individual farmers receive title to parcels of land only when they agree to pool their resources with their neighbors. The cooperatives then take over the managerial, operational and financial functions that the landlords previously performed.

By midsummer of 1963 about one third of the 13,000 villages scheduled for initial redistribution were in the process of being turned over to their new owners. This in turn amounts to about 9 percent of the total number of villages in Iran.

The program moved ahead most rapidly during its first year, under the prodding of the violently antilandlord minister of agriculture, Hassan Arsanjani. Fearing that Arsanjani's aggressive activities were creating dangerous unrest among the peasants, the Shah replaced him this spring by a professional military man, Lt. Gen. Esmail Riahi. Under Riahi's guidance land reform has moved at a more deliberate pace.

Unavoidable delays have resulted from the enormity of the administrative and organizational workload connected with the program and from the shortage of trained supervisory personnel who are to work in the cooperatives. Despite this, there have as yet been few demonstrations of impatience by the peasants still awaiting their land grants. Those already



Shah handing land title to Iranian peasant.

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Dr. HASSAN ARSANJANI
Former Minister of Agriculture



Lt. Gen. RIAHI
Minister of Agriculture



ASSADULLAH ALAM
Prime Minister

participating in the cooperatives have shown the expected enthusiasm and have contributed a good deal of the capital needed by the program out of their own family savings.

Favored by generally good weather this year, crop prospects are better than average; a rice surplus of surprising size is already assured. If the harvest now coming in can be efficiently marketed and the income fairly and quickly divided among the peasant members, the cooperatives already in operation will have passed through the critical initial phase, and prospects will be brighter for those still to be formed.

Landlord Compensation

On 27 November 1962 the cabinet approved a law providing

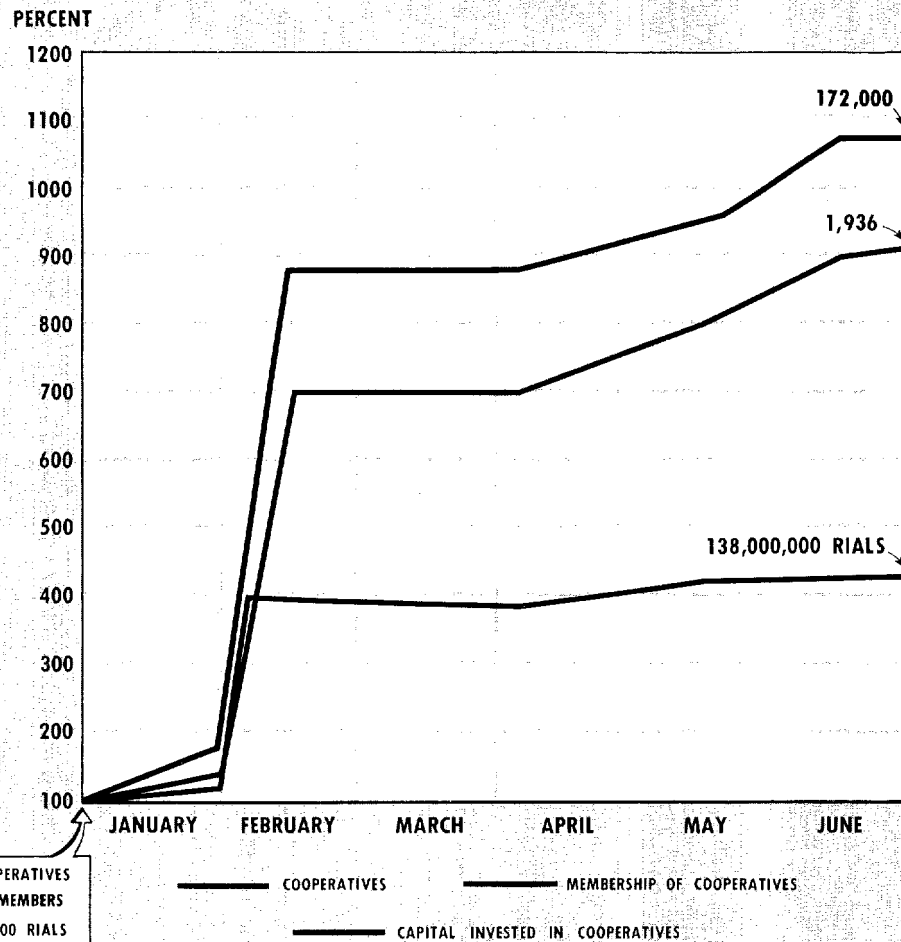
for the public sale of government-owned factories to provide funds with which to finance the initial implementation of the land reform program. After an assessment by an impartial adviser, the factories are to be brought together into a single corporation. Shares in this corporation are to be sold by the Agricultural Bank to landlords affected by land reform. The government will continue to exercise control until such time as the landlords acquire 51 percent of the corporation shares.

This system, if successful, will bring in capital for the administration of the land reform program and provide a method whereby landlords may invest in the country's future. The original concept of paying

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PERCENTAGE GROWTH IN IRANIAN LAND REFORM INDICATORS

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dispossessed landlords in installments over a ten-year period while collecting the cost from the peasants over a 15-year period overtaxed the government's available funds, especially as it is committed to pay the landlords 6-percent interest on the unpaid balances due them. Thus far, the landlords have not been very receptive to the new law.

Worker Profit Sharing

The worker profit-sharing law announced on 17 January 1963 was designed to gain for the regime the good will of the industrial workers in much the same way that land reform was aimed at attracting the support of the peasantry. The goal is twofold: to improve the lot of the workers and to improve the efficiency and production of industry. Currently the profit-sharing aspect of the law is being toned down by the government in an effort to make its other provision, collective bargaining, more palatable to employers.

The press has thus far paid little attention to this aspect of the reform program, and most observers are skeptical that it will be enforced in the near future. The government may find itself in a difficult position if the workers should try to force implementation of the profit-sharing law.

Literacy Corps

The formation of the literacy corps, the least contro-

versial element of the reform program, has evoked widespread popular support and enthusiasm. The aim is to conscript high-school graduates into the army and send them into rural areas to teach Iranian peasants to read and write. In April the first group of about 1,540 members completed its teacher training course and were moved into the villages. The success of the literacy program will be determined largely by the dedication of these young men.

Nationalization of Forests

The law nationalizing forests approved by the Iranian cabinet on 17 January 1963 is primarily a conservation measure. It provides that "all the land, site, and improvements of forests and wooded pastures shall be considered public property." Recent figures indicate that Iran's forests, which have been depleted over the years for fuel and timber, now cover only about 12 percent of the total land area of the country. No adequate provision has been made for financing the purchasing of these lands and thus far little headway has been made.

Electoral Law Changes

The new election reforms contain three main elements: (1) reduction of landlord and government influence on election supervisory boards, with more board positions to be filled by peasants, merchants, and members of local professional groups; (2) a more accurate

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system of voter registration and identification; and (3) acceleration of the election process. The last two provisions have been or will be carried out by the government apparently with success and in good faith. The government has not, however, given up its prerogative of recommending candidates to governors and of passing final judgment on those who may enter the political arena.

The Shah obtained further support for his program by announcing in February that for the first time women would be allowed to vote in the general elections. The only major opposition to this new twist in the "White Revolution" is that of the conservative religious clerics. Most educated Iranians, tribal peoples, and many villagers and workers see nothing wrong in the "spectacle" of women voting; however, it is believed that the government, in an attempt to appease the religious leaders, will allow few women candidates in the coming elections.

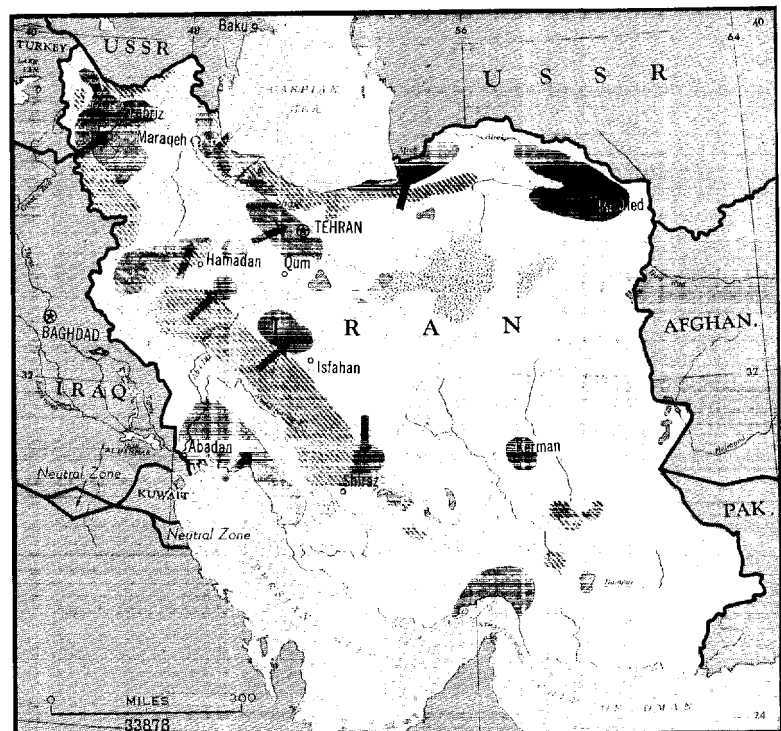
The Opposition

The Shah's major political opposition comes from the loosely organized National Front. The Front is a vehicle for expression of grievances by the newly emerging middle class and intelligentsia. These elements resent the Shah's arbitrary rule and feel frustrated politically.

The Front's platform is summed up in its slogan--"Re-

forms Yes, Dictatorship No." It faces the dilemma of favoring reforms without appearing to support the Shah. Many of the Front's most prominent leaders are in jail, and no decision has been reached as to what its election tactics will be. The most concrete proposal so far is to boycott the elections and declare them rigged. This tactic forced the Shah to dissolve the parliament shortly after the 1961 elections. To diminish the force of such charges, the Shah will probably release many Front leaders just before the elections.

Various splinter groups
based on personal loyalties are



Areas of Land Reform Activity - 1 September 1963

- | | |
|---------------------------------|-------------------|
| → Areas of land reform activity | Swamp |
| → Cultivated area | Salt waste |
| → Forest area | Intermittent lake |

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allied with the National Front. The most fanatical of these is the Freedom Movement, which is irrevocably opposed to the Shah and favors collaboration with all dissident elements, even religious reactionaries, in order to overthrow the government. The Communist Tudeh Party has been so penetrated and harassed by SAVAK that it is not expected to play a significant role in the elections.

Disaffected classes include the landlords, the tribal leaders, and the clerics who are watching their former positions of power and prestige crumble around them. They are strongly supported in their opposition by the bazaar merchants, who are currently suffering from an economic recession, and by the unemployed and poorly paid workers who have not yet benefited from the reform program. This latter group is easily swayed by emotional speeches and religious fanaticism.

The clerics and the landlords, like the intellectual oppositionists, are disunited and unsure of their election tactics, although some attempts apparently are being made to organize. Clerical leaders have proposed that conservatives join forces with the National Front

and boycott the elections, but such a plan would probably have only limited success. A number of the religious leaders, jailed for their part in the June demonstrations, have now been released but continue to be under close surveillance by the government's security forces.

The government has the means to restrict the activities of its opposition and is using them. It withholds or delays permission for rallies and demonstrations, it keeps news of opposition activities out of the newspapers and radio; and it uses threats and bribes to keep its leaders inactive. Thus far no one leader has been allowed to emerge who could symbolize opposition to the Shah as Mossadeq did in 1951-53.

The Shah's regime must ultimately rely on the military forces for its existence. Thus far, the military has remained loyal to him, and the regime has weathered the internal crises of this past spring and summer. The new parliament will have many new faces from the professional classes and representing the newly vocal peasants and workers. It should for the time being give the regime another means of generating support for reforms. (CONFIDENTIAL)

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